

spend about \$100 billion a year on education, and \$40 or so billion on highways. But in 10 years, we will be spending \$800 billion on interest alone. And how much of that is owned by foreign governments, many of whom are not our friends and not our allies?

So even the President has said this debt is unsustainable. The economists say it is unsustainable. Every politician I know of says that it is unsustainable. Yet we continue outrageous spending, and in the midst of this financial tempest, what do we now have before us? The promise of a \$2.5 trillion new health care program—\$2.5 trillion as it will cost when fully implemented.

The question I have heard asked of the President, and I have heard asked of the Democratic leadership and the Congress: But, Congressman, Senator, we don't have the money. What do you say about that?

They say: Oh, don't worry. We have this great new program that is going to help you in so many ways. We are going to spend a lot of money, true, but it is going to be deficit neutral. My goodness, it is not even going to be budget neutral, it is going to save us \$130 billion in 10 years. Will you guys just relax? Don't worry about it. We are going to save \$130 billion. Thank us. We are going to give you this program, save \$130 billion, and you will get a lot more health care out here—still with 24 million uninsured, but we will have a lot of money spent to help you with your health insurance, they will say.

The President said he would not sign a bill into law that would add one single dime to the national debt. Well, people say: How are you going to do that? That sounds pretty good, if we can make that happen. How are we going to do it? Well, the answer is we are going to raid Medicare, we are going to raise taxes, and we are not going to pay the doctors who do our work. There will be \$494 billion in tax increases, \$465 billion in Medicare cuts—and Medicare is already on a glide path to insolvency by 2017—and a \$250 billion shortfall for our physicians. Those are payments they have been promised and they thought they were going to get as part of this fix.

So I would just make the point that we can give everyone in America a new car if we just raised taxes and raided Medicare. That would be pretty easy, wouldn't it? Anything can count as deficit-neutral if you raise taxes high enough. So this is not a deficit-neutral program. Just because we raise taxes, does it have to be that we should prioritize first to use that money to start a new program? What about addressing the shortfall in highway funding that we are hearing so much about? What about the cost of our effort in Afghanistan? What about other expenses we have? What about saving Medicare, a program our seniors depend on? If we are going to raise taxes, why don't we use the money for that? Who says we

have to raise taxes to start a new program?

Well, I suggest to you that based on the omission of doctors fix alone we don't have a \$130 billion surplus in this bill. The fact that it is unpaid for, we have a \$130 billion net deficit because the bill fails to pay \$250 billion in doctor fees that I predict we will eventually pay, one way or another. The way we have done it in the past is we have just socked it to the debt. We have just paid the doctors, raised no revenue, and changed the law. We have just paid them and increased our debt that much each year.

So I say these are not sound numbers. I am telling you, the American people's instincts are right about this. We are not being responsible about how we manage the people's business, promising that this bill is going to be better for everybody. But let me ask for the average American who is doing the right thing, who is struggling and scraping together money to make insurance premiums each month, will that person pay less for their health care? CBO basically says no. If that individual is not in an employer-provided group plan already, if he's among those who are already paying the highest costs for health care in the country, then he is one of the people who are going to pay as much as 10 to 13 percent more under this bill than he currently pays.

Will health care, as a percentage of our total economy, our total GDP, will it be reduced by this bill, therefore getting more health care at a better cost? Not according to the scoring we have seen. In fact, just the opposite is the case. If this bill passes, a larger percentage of our GDP will go to health care than before.

So I just raise concerns. This is a plan to create an entirely new government-dominated health care plan. This is a new program. How are we going to do it? By raiding Medicare, raising taxes, and not paying doctors, among a bunch of other flimflammy that is in the bill. We talk about this public option. Well, Senator BAUCUS says we may not have a public option. It is in the House bill, and it is in this bill that is on the Senate floor.

So we don't have the money for a monumental new health care program. We could do a lot of things to improve health care in America that could help contain the rising cost of health care, that could be done in a way that would not diminish the circumstances we are in today. What about Medicare? Do you remember when President Bush proposed fixing Social Security and many Senators—Democrats as well as Republicans—said: Well, President Bush, if you want to do something, why don't you fix Medicare? That is the one in the biggest trouble?

In truth, Medicare is sinking faster than Social Security. Medicare will decline by 2017 and go into deficit. We have a shortfall in Medicare now. What we should do is focus on Medicare

every way that we can to create efficiencies and more productivity, contain growth and cost and extend that period of time before it goes in default. The last thing we should be doing is taking \$465 billion from Medicare. It is only going to accelerate its decline. That is common sense.

Mr. President, I would just like to read a letter I received from one of my constituents—Mr. Bill Eberle in Huntsville, AL. He said:

I strongly urge you to vote against the health care bill passed by the House. The worst part of this bill is that much of the cost will be paid by cuts to Medicare. I am 68 years old, and I have paid into Medicare for 40 years believing that it would cover much of my health care costs when I became 65. Now I am being told that the government has found people who need coverage more than I do, and they will cut the care for which I have paid for 40 years in order to cover people who have paid nothing. It is not the government's money. The money belongs to those of us who have paid into it for so many years and we are watching as it is being taken from us.

Well, I think that is a pretty fair statement of it. Medicare is heading to insolvency in 2017. We have had a number of proposals to try to help on that front. We haven't had much support from our colleagues on the other side of the aisle even for modest fixes.

I remember one bill that was going to reduce Medicare spending by \$10 billion over 5 years, and you would have thought we were going to savage the whole program, although we were trying to make it more sustainable in the long run. It was a big mess. But now we are talking about \$465 billion being taken from Medicare.

So, Mr. President, Medicare is a big problem. We need to work hard to bring it under control and honor our seniors who have been paying into this program and not drawing a dime from it on the promise that when they turned 65 they would start being able to draw on Medicare and it would take care of their health care needs in their senior years. That was a solemn commitment. Before we start some monumental new program, we need to make sure we are prepared to honor that commitment because they paid their money. They have paid their money. So if we raise taxes, why shouldn't we pay the Medicare bill first? If we raise taxes, why shouldn't we pay our doctors the money we owe them or some of the other priorities that we have in our country?

Mr. President, I feel strongly that the American people are sending us the right message. They are acting like good public-minded citizens would. They are seeing a reckless new spending program that they rightly anticipate will grow and grow and expand far beyond all the projections we have today; that it will result in a government takeover of a whole large portion of our economy, and they have not been impressed that the government can run these kinds of things very effectively and they are not in